



News Release



Shelby County Health Department
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 18, 2015

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Shelby County Health Department Cautions Residents to Stay Safe in the Extreme Cold

MEMPHIS, TN – Due to the currently falling temperatures and forecasted extreme lows through this evening, the Shelby County Health Department (SCHD) is strongly advising residents to take precautions to protect themselves, their families, their pets, and their home from the cold.

The Shelby County Health Department is actively working with Mayor Mark Luttrell's Office, the Shelby County Office of Preparedness, the Shelby County Fire Department and other valuable county resources to ensure residents remain aware of and protected from the threats of extreme cold. **"We encourage everyone to continue to monitor local news for up-to-date weather reports and road conditions and be vigilant to recognizing the dangers associated with the extreme temperatures we are experiencing," said Dr. Helen Morrow, Health Officer for the Shelby County Health Department.**

During extreme cold events, many residents may seek to provide additional heat in their homes with alternative heating sources. The primary hazards to avoid when using alternate sources for heating are carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock, and fire. To protect yourself, your family, and your home, SCHD recommends the following:

- Maintain ventilation when using kerosene heaters to avoid the build-up of toxic fumes. Refuel kerosene heaters outside and keep them at least three feet from flammable objects
- Never use a charcoal grill, hibachi, lantern, or portable camping stove inside a home
- Never use a gas range or oven to heat a home
- Do not burn paper in a fireplace
- Use only the type of fuel your heater is designed to use – don't substitute
- Never place a space heater on top of furniture or near water
- Avoid using extension cords to plug in your space heater
- If your space heater has a damaged electrical cord or produces sparks, do not use it
- Store a multipurpose, dry-chemical fire extinguisher near the area to be heated

Serious health problems can result from prolonged exposure to the cold. SCHD is encouraging all residents to stay indoors unless absolutely necessary. If you must go outdoors, make any trip as brief as possible, and take these precautions:

- Avoid overexertion while outside
- Cover your mouth while outside - protect your lungs from extremely cold air
- Keep dry – change out of wet clothing to prevent loss of body heat
- Watch for signs of frostbite – loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities (fingers, toes, ear lobes, tip of nose)
- Watch for signs of hypothermia – uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness, and apparent exhaustion
- Do not drink alcoholic or caffeinated beverages – they cause your body to lose heat more rapidly

For more information about extreme cold, download the CDC's "Extreme Cold: A Prevention Guide to Promoting Your Personal Health and Safety" by visiting <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/pdf/extreme-cold-guide.pdf>. And for local, daily tips, follow the Shelby County Health Department on Twitter @SCHDResponse and @ShelbyTNHealth.